CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 27, 2020

The City Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:00 p.m. in the Conference Room on the 27th day of February, 2020, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmember Bierman, Hall, Wilson, and

Chairman Holman

ABSENT: Councilmember Petrone

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator

Ms. Mariah Lindsey, Certified Arborist with Tree

Wizard

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Traffic

Engineer

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works

Mr. David Riesland, Traffic Engineer

Mr. Wyatt Schmitz, Professor of Social Science,

University of Oklahoma

Mr. Michael Scroggins, Information Technology

(IT) and Marketing Manager for Embark Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney

Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

PUBLIC TRANSIT RIDERSHIP REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY AND TRANSIT RIDERSHIP FARES.

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator, said the fixed route service transported 29,164 passengers in January, which is an 11% increase compared to January 2019. The daily average ridership was 1,326, an increase of 6%. He said FYE 20 to date ridership (July – January) is 181,853, a decrease of 4% over the same period last year.

The paratransit service transported 1,833 passengers in January, a decrease of 30% compared to January 2019. Average daily ridership was 83, a decrease of 33%. FYE 20 paratransit ridership is 13,173, a decrease of 32%. For the month of January, the paratransit service had 0.61% trip requests denied due to capacity.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Johnson highlighted transit activities and said Staff submitted the FYE 20 grant application that is currently being reviewed by the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) and submitted the required civil rights documents. On January 17, 2020, City Staff hosted a Transit Ride Along for Norman's state representatives and senators and State Senator Standridge and Representative Sterling participated in the event. Attendees met at City Hall for a quick discussion led by City Staff and the Oklahoma Transit Association (OTA) then rode Route 110 (Main Street route), which was full. On January 23, 2020, Mayor Clark hosted a Read and Ride on Route 121 beginning at the Central Library. Mayor Clark read winter themed books and discussed the importance of public transit to the community. He said Staff is working on some competitive FTA grants for electric busses and bus facilities as well as the Association of Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that sets the agenda detailing work scheduled for the fiscal year in terms of planning and how to approach the operations of the bus system in the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP).

Mr. Johnson said on January 21, 2020, Council was updated on next steps for transit needs, i.e. branding, fare structures, maintenance facility, etc. He said the Transit Long Range Plan (TLRP) can be updated to include a fare analysis and a maintenance facility, which is a priority as well as new busses. He said policies can be adopted, as needed, to make sure the system is running as efficiently as possible under FTA guidance. He said a fare analysis can be very helpful in deciding a reasonable fare structure in Norman by diving deeply into other community's fare structures. He said Staff is requesting Council's feedback on the fare analysis and Chairman Holman said he would support updating the TLRP to include a fare analysis, but felt that free fares would remain in place until the bus system is operated by a regional transit entity.

Councilmember Hall arrived at 4:10 p.m.

Mr. Johnson suggested extending current free fares until the fare analysis is prepared and Council and Staff have had time to review the detailed information.

Councilmember Wilson asked how much a fare analysis will cost and whether the City has the money and Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said if Council approves, Staff will begin looking at consultants and costs. He said it generally costs between \$100,000 to \$150,000 and \$320,000 is budgeted for fare box upgrades, which Council has not shown interest in moving forward with so that money could be used towards the analysis costs.

Councilmember Wilson said she did not see a benefit of paying for a consultant with the City's budget being so tight right now especially if there be a regional transit system in two years, but would be more supportive if the analysis would help the City obtain more grant funds. Mr. Johnson said the City needs a TLRP so when the City applies for grants, the City can prove it has done its due diligence on transit needs. He said the current TLRP is outdated and reflects using the bus transfer station at University of Oklahoma and includes OU bus routes, which the City does not operate. Mr. Johnson said the analysis will also include reviewing regional transit system stops, current bus stops, number of busses, route changes, beneficial locations for transit stations, etc.

Item 1, continued:

Councilmember Hall said this would seem to be a beneficial thing to do before the regional transit transition takes place and the City participates in the complete RTA system. She said the City needs be as prepared as possible when it comes time to integrate into the transition plan because it will only make for a smoother and quicker transition.

Mr. O'Leary said the City could have a regional transit system in the next five to ten years, which is more realistic than two years. He said there will need to be a lot of public input when the time comes to implementing a transition plan.

Councilmember Holman said the RTA will be looking at the entire metro area and a lot of the metro areas the RTA will serve do not currently have public transportation service, i.e., Moore, large portions of Edmond, large portions of Oklahoma City, Midwest City, Del City, etc. He said five to ten years for rail service is probably a good estimate, but the bus system is the key part of the commuter rail and the City will be ready to integrate with rail service. He said right now, the City does not have a bus hub so he would support using some of the money budgeted for fare box upgrades for an update of the TLRP as well as a fare analysis.

Councilmember Bierman arrived at 4:20 p.m.

Councilmember Bierman said bus passes will expire in June and she has been contacted by paratransit riders who are concerned about the recertification process and fixed route riders who are concerned that they have not received notification regarding renewing their bus passes.

Mr. Michael Scroggins, Information Technology (IT) and Marketing Manager for Embark, said riders are notified sixty days in advance of their expiration date and every paratransit passenger is certified for up to three years.

Mr. Johnson said if any Councilmember receives questions regarding the transit system, please refer those citizens to him and he will be happy to answer their questions or refer them to EMBARK.

Mr. O'Leary said Staff has been reviewing 3,300 records from OU that have been transferred to the City and a lot of the information is outdated and EMBARK has been making sure everyone is given a chance to recertify. He said there will probably be approximately 600 certified paratransit customers.

Councilmember Bierman said she has been contacted about concerns that some of the bus drivers are not familiar with their routes and she understands there will be a learning curve for drivers not familiar with Norman; however, she would like to see more communication between drivers and the public that some drivers are new and would appreciate the public's patience. She suggested posting this type of information inside the busses.

Item 1, continued:

Chairman Holman said some bus signs have not been updated or are faded and Mr. Johnson said the City is still going through the transition process of branding and signs are a part of that process.

Chairman Holman asked for an update on a bus stop sign in front of the Crest Store and Mr. Johnson said Staff is still in discussions with Crest since this is private property and the City cannot put a sign up without their permission. He said even though there is no sign, the bus stops there to take on riders or let riders off.

Items submitted for the record

- 1. Public Transportation Monthly Report for January 2020
- 2. Norman Transit Ridership Totals for January 2020

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Item 2, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING CENTERLINE STRIPING AND ALL-WAY STOP SIGN INSTALLATION ON RURAL ROADS.

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Traffic Engineer, said Staff will be presenting background on the process of making decisions related to striping roadways or installing multi-way stop signs and will specifically discuss the criteria for both with recommendations. He said the City of Norman has 26,000 plus traffic signs, 200 plus miles of centerline stripe, 153 traffic signals, 93 flashing beacons, and 10 actuated crosswalks.

Mr. Lombardo said uniformity and consistent application of standards for traffic signs, road surface markings, and signals are key, e.g., design (size, color, shape), application, location, and operation. He said the American Association of State and Highway and Transportation Officials recognized the need for standards since 1927, and that has evolved over time. The most current adopted standard is the 2009 edition of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The MUTCD contains basic principles for traffic control devices and is an essential traffic engineering tool with a long history of use. He said State and Local Transportation Planners and Traffic Engineers use the MUTCD as well as owners of private roads open to the pubic, construction and engineering contractors, and law enforcement personnel.

Mr. Lombardo said the MUTCD is the national standard and compliance is required. The MUTCD was adopted by the Oklahoma State Legislature as the State's manual under Title 47 of the Motor Vehicle Code and in the City of Norman Code of Ordinances. He said non-compliance can result in the loss of federal-aid funds as well as in a significant increase in tort liability. He said compliance is also required for the American Public Works Association (APWA) accreditation and the City of Norman has that accreditation.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Lombardo said the MUTCD contains nine factors that cover everything ranging from signs, pavement markings, traffic signals, temporary traffic control panels, school zones; traffic control devices for low volume road; railroad and light rail crossings; bicycle facilities, and traffic control needs in special use areas.

Councilmember Wilson asked if there is a variance process and Mr. Lombardo said yes, there is a national committee that reviews the MUTCD for anyone requesting a variance.

Multi-Way Stop Signs

The MUTCD establishes criteria for multi-way stop control as a need of minimum traffic volume (300 vehicles per hour on the major street and 200 vehicles per hour on the minor street during eight different hours of the day), or five or more traffic collisions of the type susceptible to correction with all-way stop control (e.g., right angle or left turning collisions), and 30% reduction in hourly requirement for roadways with higher speeds (more than 40 miles per hour), which is typical in a rural area.

The multi-way stop control process for evaluation includes collecting and analyzing traffic volumes, vehicular speeds, and traffic collision data; photographing all intersection approaches and sight lines; measuring available stopping sight distance; and preparing a report documenting the information collected and offering recommendations for any appropriate changes.

Mr. Lombardo said the MUTCD uses the language shall, should, and may. He said shall is an absolute, should is a strong recommendation, and may is a recommendation. He said the MUTCD goes above and beyond minimum national standards.

Mr. Lombardo said the City recently made a change at the intersection of Post Oak Road and 36th Avenue S.E. He said the process began with a call from a citizen then the City conducted a study and concluded an all-way stop was needed instead of the current two-way stop. He said the number of collisions over a five-year period justified making this change.

Mr. Lombardo said Federal Highway Administration Safety Research has shown that too many stop signs discourage good driving habits and when overused at low traffic volume intersections, drivers become careless about stopping (specifically dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists who may have a false sense of security from the existence of a stop sign). It has also shown that it is dangerous for motorists who mistakenly assume other drivers are going to stop. He said another study was more direct in its findings that drivers tend to ignore unwarranted traffic controls or obstacles that, in their view, are unnecessary. If they are frequently required to stop for stop signs and rarely see any traffic on the opposing street, they may become impatient and tend to disregard stop signs that have no obvious need. The City of Norman's local study found that 90% of drivers failed to come to a complete stop and 50% ran stops without slowing down at unwarranted intersections.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Wilson said 36th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane is a downhill drive into a "bowl" with a two-way stop on 36th Avenue S.E., but she believes this intersection needs to be an all-way stop. She said drivers are self-regulating themselves at this intersection because people stop on Cedar Lane, even though there are no stop signs, and that makes the intersection more dangerous.

Chairman Holman said the intersection of Stinson Street and George Avenue is another dangerous two-way stop intersection and the City has reviewed the intersection, but it does not meet the traffic standards for an all-way stop.

Councilmember Bierman said she really does not want to have to tell people that someone died at the 36th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane intersection because it did not meet the "standard" for an all-way stop. She said in many cases, when appropriate, the City should be striving to exceed standards and do better than and be safer than other communities. She feels that a local study of an all-way stop on a high speed road would yield different results than a study conducted in a neighborhood or low-speed four-way intersection in core Norman. Mr. Lombardo said traffic safety is such an important part of his job and he uses the best tools available to do the best job he can. He assured Councilmembers that when Staff looks at traffic issues, safety is the main focus.

Mr. O'Leary said if Staff does not follow the MUTCD and someone were to run that all-way stop sign and were in an accident and dies, the City would be liable so that is why the City follows the MUTCD regulations very carefully.

Pavement Markings

Mr. Lombardo said Section 3B.01 of the MUTCD establishes criteria for use of center line markings. He said center line markings **shall** (required) be placed on all paved urban arterials and collectors with an average daily traffic volume of at least 6,000 cars per day and center line marking **should** (recommended) be placed on rural arterials and collectors with an average daily traffic volume of at least 3,000 cars per day. He said City of Norman criteria is similar to MUTCD except that center line markings **shall** be placed on all paved urban arterials and collectors with an average daily traffic volume of at least 5,000 cars per day instead of 6,000 and center line marking **shall**, not should, be placed on rural arterials and collectors with an average daily traffic volume of at least 1,000 cars per day instead of 3,000.

Between January 1, 2017, and September 30, 2019, the Norman Police Department (NPD) investigated 6,046 traffic collisions citywide and found only 279 crashes (or 4.61%) on rural arterial and collector roadways east of 60th Avenue East. Mr. Lombardo said 222 of the 279 collisions on rural arterial and collector roadways occurred on facilities marked with center lines (79.57%) and 57 of the 279 collisions on rural arterial and collector roadways occurred on facilities without center lines (20.43%). These 57 collisions represent 0.94% of the total collisions investigated by NPD during the 2.75-year study period.

Item 2, continued:

Pavement Markings, continued:

Mr. Lombardo said the City of Norman has 79 center line miles of roadway striped in east Norman (east of 60th Avenue East) and a majority of the collisions within the study area were occurring in areas east of 60th Avenue East. He highlighted recent additions to the Rural Roadway Striping Program that includes Franklin Road: 36th Avenue N.W. to 48th Avenue N.W. (one mile in Ward Three); 36th Avenue N.E.: Alameda Street to Tecumseh Road (two miles in Ward Five); Robinson Street: 72nd Avenue N.E. to 84th Avenue N.E. (one mile in Ward Five); 84th Avenue N.E.: Alameda Street to Robinson Street (one mile in Ward Five); 72nd Avenue N.E.: Alameda Street to Robinson Street (one mile in Ward Five); 48th Avenue N.E.: Alameda Street to Rock Creek Road (two miles in Ward Five); 36th Avenue S.E.: State Highway 9 to Post Oak Road (two miles in Ward Five); Cedar Lane Road: Black Locust Drive to 36th Avenue S.E. (one-half mile in Ward Five); and Indian Hills Road: 12th Avenue N.E. to 36th Avenue N.E. (three miles in Ward Six).

Councilmember Wilson said some roadways in her Ward were repaved, but not restriped and that is her biggest concern. Mr. O'Leary said he was unaware of any roadway that did not get restriped and Councilmember Wilson said 108th Avenue is one that comes to mind and Mr. O'Leary said he would look into that.

Mr. Lombardo said the cost of center line striping from the edge line costs \$21,000 per mile and there are 132 miles of un-marked rural collector roadways. He said funds needed to strip unmarked collector roadways every four to six years is \$2,772,000. The said the City is beginning to slowly grow to the east bringing more traffic and recent efforts to stripe additional roads reflects that.

Crash Statistics

Mr. Lombardo highlighted crash statistics in east Norman from the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office (OHSSO) that consists of 45 KAB (K=Fatal; A=Incapacitating Injury; B=Non-Incapacitating Injury) crashes that resulted in five fatal, nine incapacitating, and 31 non-incapacitating injuries. He said of the five fatal crashes, one occurred at the intersection of State Highway 9 (SH9) and 60th Avenue S.E. involving two vehicles, one non-intersection crash occurred between 72nd Avenue S.E. and one non-intersection crash occurred between 84th Avenue S.E. involving a single vehicle. One crash occurred at the intersection of Alameda Street and 60th Avenue S.E. involving two vehicles and one occurred on 60th Avenue S.E. between SH9 and Lindsey Street involving a single vehicle. He said the higher number of traffic, the higher number of collisions.

Mr. Lombardo said the 2018 KAB Crash Rate in Norman ranks 41st out of 76 in the State and one of the lowest in the Oklahoma City metro area. Crash rates for rural roads in east Norman are low compared to State average for all two-lane rural local roadways. He said 75% of rural two-lane roads in Norman have crash rates of less than 1.0 crashes per 100 million vehicle miles travelled; 40% of East Norman roadways have a crash rate of zero; and the highest crash rate in east Norman is significantly lower than the State average crash rate for similar type roadways.

Item 2, continued:

Crash Statistics, continued:

Mr. Lombardo said Staff is recommending a comprehensive road audit of the four roadway segments with the higher crash rates in east Norman to determine if there are any opportunities to reduce the crash rate. The highest crash rates in east Norman occurred at Cedar Lane Road between one-half mile east of 48th Avenue S.E. and one-half mile east of 60th Avenue S.E.; 60th Avenue S.E. between one-half mile north of SH9 and one-half mile north of Lindsey Street; 120th Avenue N.E. between Alameda Drive and one-half mile south of Rock Creek Road; and 156th Avenue N.E. between one-half mile north of Rock Creek Road and one-half mile north of Tecumseh Road. He said a Road Safety Audit (RSA) is the formal safety performance examination of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent, multi-disciplinary team. It quantitatively estimates and reports on potential road safety and identifies opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users. The goal of an RSA is to answer the following questions:

- What elements of the road may present a safety concern: to what extent, to which road users, and under what circumstances?
- What opportunities exist to eliminate or mitigate identified safety concerns?

Councilmember Wilson thanked Staff for the information; however, she would like to really dig into the 36th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane intersection because it is an anomaly and would like a mechanism to identify areas of concern where exceeding a recommendation should be allowed. She said that area is beginning to see new development, both residential and commercial, that will bring in more traffic and the City needs to stay ahead of the situation plus this intersection is scary and many people avoid it altogether or they stop on Cedar Lane at the intersection, which is a safety issue. Mr. Lombardo said there are segments on both 36th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane that should be striped with center lines and edge lines.

Councilmember Wilson asked how 36th Avenue S.E. and Cedar Lane could be striped center line and edge line when they are so narrow and Mr. Lombardo said Staff will evaluate that, but if the City can maintain the minimum lane width of the roadway then City will stripe and/or edge. He said if there is not enough room for both, there will be a center line for sure.

Councilmember Bierman asked why the City has a road like Cedar Lane that may not be wide enough for two full lanes and Mr. Lombardo said the City is required to maintain at least a nine-foot width for a driving lane. He said double yellow lines are four inches wide with a four-inch gap so there is almost one foot of roadway taken with center striping and the edge line cannot be on the exact edge because of possible rural road erosion. He said if the minimum width cannot be met, the City will not stripe the road and that may be why there are rural roads not striped.

Chairman Holman asked if the road audit, when completed, will come back to this Committee and Mr. Lombardo said yes, Staff can bring the audit results to the Committee. Chairman Holman thanked Staff for the great data presented tonight.

Item 2, continued:

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Centerline Striping and Multi-Way Stop Installations in Rural Areas," Council Community Planning and Transportation Committee dated February 27, 2020

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Councilmember Bierman left the meeting at 5:39 p.m.

Item 3, being:

PRESENTATION ON THE NORMAN FRUIT TREE INITIATIVE.

Mr. Wyatt Schmitz, Professor of Social Science at OU, introduced Ms. Mariah Menzie, Certified Arborist with Tree Wizard. He said he is not an expert on trees, but became very interested in fruit trees during his many travels around the country. He recently became involved in a proposal to establish fruit tree orchards around Norman. He proposes to establish fruit tree orchards throughout Norman's parks (beginning with an initial small orchard in Andrews Park) and other public areas and encouraging community involvement in the care of trees through the strategic planning of urban orchards and fruit tree giveaways. He would like to have feedback and support from Council on this proposal.

Ms. Menzie said trees are a resource people should take ownership in and communities can transition into that mindset, which is part of this proposal.

Mr. Schmitz said benefits to the community include contributing to the environment and social goals of Plan Norman; providing educational opportunities on gardening, health, and nutrition; encouraging local residents to live more sustainably and grow their own food; creating areas to support pollinators; and providing food to low-income groups and individuals.

Mr. Schmitz said he is proposing the City of Norman host the initiative and numerous organizations and agencies in Norman will establish and care for the orchards. He said Cleveland County Oklahoma State University (OSU) Extension has committed to providing educational support and training on watering, pruning, and pest control. He said an orchard could be used to provide hands-on education to groups and individuals. The Tree Wizard has committed to supporting the initiative through assessment, service, and education.

Mr. Schmitz said with Council's approval, he will establish a group or committee to guide the initiative's collaborative efforts, identify objectives, responsibilities, and roles of involved parties, and identify a location for an initial orchard. He identified potential funding for the projects as possible grants from the Tree Bank Foundation and Sarkey Foundation.

Item 3, continued:

Mr. Schmitz said the Tree Bank Foundation already provides the trees the City of Norman gives away each year and they have a grant program geared specifically for orchards. He said the application period is between June to September and if awarded they would provide trees, water bags, etc., as part of a coordinated effort.

Councilmember Wilson asked if Mr. Schmitz had talked to Tim Vermillion, City of Norman Forrester, and Ms. Menzie said yes, Mr. Vermillion is very supportive of the proposal. She said he has agreed to help with initial oversight for proper pruning, watering, etc., for a successful program. She said her biggest concern is irrigation, so the location is very important for irrigation purposes and most of the parks are not irrigated.

Councilmember Wilson said Cleveland County has discussed having some fruit trees at their Healthy Living Block and asked if Mr. Schmitz had talked with the County officials and Mr. Schmitz said no, but he was aware of Norman Regional Hospital's proposed plans for a fruit trees on the Porter Campus as part of their Inspire Health Plan. He said while these projects are great, it is not the same as having individuals invested in a project from planting to watering to pruning to harvesting.

Councilmember Hall said Dimensions Academy on Findlay Avenue have plans for a tree orchard at their location and suggested Mr. Schmitz speak with them about a possible location for his initiative.

Ms. Menzie said the great thing about Andrews Park is that it is visible, has ease of access, has good soil, plenty of room, plenty of sunlight, plenty of parking, and access to water. She also likes the idea of a Finley Avenue location due to its nearness to OSU Extension.

Councilmember Wilson said fruit trees can be messy so that is her only concern other than maintenance. Ms. Menzie agreed and said the trees could also draw wildlife and she did not know if it would be a problem if the trees attract raccoons and possums to parks where children play. She said birds could be a problem as well and can decimate an entire harvest so netting may be needed. Councilmember Wilson said a lot of bird droppings would be a problem as well. Mr. Schmitz said these are reasons the location is so important and there will be challenges.

Councilmember Wilson asked how many trees make an orchard and Ms. Menzie said it depends on the space, but 15 trees maximum is the goal and they would be a mixed variety of dwarf fruit trees with a wide range of harvest periods.

Chairman Holman suggested Mr. Schmitz discuss the proposal with the Parks Director and Mr. Vermillion and Staff can bring recommendations back to the Committee for further review.

Items submitted for the record

1. Norman Fruit Tree Initiative Proposal

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Item 4, being:

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS.

Chairman Holman said he was contacted by a constituent about on-street parking on Lincoln Avenue. He invited the constituent, Mr. Robert Kerr who lives on Lincoln Avenue, to speak to the Committee about the issue.

Mr. Kerr said Lincoln Avenue is a three block street that runs north and south and the 1400 block has no parking on both sides of the street. He said 1300 block allows parking on the east side, but needs to have no parking on both sides of the street for safety concerns. He said Lincoln Avenue gets a lot of traffic due to Headington Hall and a lot of that traffic is semi-trucks. He said Headington Hall has a loading dock on Lincoln Avenue and receives a lot of deliveries. He said people also use Lincoln Avenue as a cut-through from Lindsey Street to Stinson Street or Jenkins Avenue. He said OU is currently constructing a parking lot so there is a lot of construction activity taking place with those construction vehicles are using Lincoln Avenue and once the construction is complete there will be access to the parking lot from Lincoln Avenue. He said he has harrowing experiences everyday and asked the Committee to consider making Lincoln Avenue no parking on both sides on all three blocks.

Chairman Holman said he thought Council had the ability to address no parking on streets without the petition process, if needed.

Councilmember Hall asked how that is initiated and Chairman Holman said the Committee would request Staff place an item on a future agenda for consideration. Councilmember Hall said there are many streets in Ward Four that have the same issues.

Chairman Holman requested Staff prepare information for the March meeting and Councilmember Hall asked that Symmes Street be included in that.

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The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.